

## Digital jam solved in classical music

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Opera lovers and classical music aficionados have long lamented the particular difficulties they face in organizing their music in digital programs and portable players. Now a new standard announced Monday could give them something to applaud.

Most digital systems such as the industry-leading iPod from Apple Computer Inc. organize tracks by song name, artist and album title, and display those three lines on music-player screens. That's enough for most genres of music, but classical tracks contain much more data.

For example, while there is only one Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, there are innumerable recordings of it by different orchestras, under different conductors. Sometimes online databases of these recordings will list the composer as the "artist" and sometimes the conductor or the ensemble. So an iPod might be hiding the Ninth Symphony under "Leonard Bernstein" instead of "Ludwig van Beethoven."

Gracenote Inc., which operates a huge database for Apple's iTunes and other digital song services, says it has developed a solution — a new data standard for classical music. Emeryville, Calif.-based Gracenote announced the system at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Essentially, the new approach offers a standardized way of cramming the additional relevant data in classical music — such as composer, ensemble, movement number or soloist — into the three-line display.

One resulting "track" would appear like this:

"Vivaldi: The Four Seasons, Op. 8/1, 'Spring' — 1. Allegro"

Meanwhile, the "artist" line for the same track would cite both the star violinist and his conductor on the recording:

"Joseph Silverstein, Seiji Ozawa, Boston Symphony Orchestra"

Why did it take so long for someone to crack this problem? One reason, says Jim Hollingsworth, Gracenote's senior vice president of marketing, is that it's time-consuming to re-enter classical music information in databases. Gracenote has converted more than 10,000 classical albums into the new format, with more recordings on the way.

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